

STATE OF COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION



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ADVISORY: COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO VOTE ON ENDORSED DIPLOMA CRITERIA

DENVER – Members of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and the State Board of Education will consider the mutual adoption of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) endorsed high school diploma criteria at their joint meeting on Thursday, Aug. 15.

If approved, school districts may begin using the criteria to award PWR endorsed diplomas, which signify a student has fulfilled a series of additional requirements and is academically prepared for college without the need for remediation or additional coursework. The diploma guarantees a student will be placed in college-level courses at most state public colleges and universities, and will be given priority consideration for admission and placement at highly selective institutions such as the University of Colorado.

The endorsed diploma is yet another step in the state's journey toward an aligned education system from preschool to postsecondary. It is required under the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, or CAP4K, approved by state lawmakers in 2008. The law initiated a series of steps with one overarching goal: increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for success in college or the workplace.

Along with the high school graduation guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education in May, the PWR endorsed criteria provide one more path toward a meaningful diploma for Colorado students. School districts are not mandated to offer the PWR endorsed diploma – instead, participation is voluntary. Aurora Public Schools, which piloted the criteria during the 2012-13 school year, is expected to offer the first PWR endorsed diplomas in spring 2014.

A statewide task force of parents, high school leaders and postsecondary administrators, who began meeting in 2011, developed the PWR endorsed diploma criteria. Governing boards of all 23 Colorado institutions of higher education have approved the criteria.

The PWR endorsed diploma criteria consists of four readiness indicators, which students must meet at any point in time prior to graduation:

1. Student is college ready in math and English language arts
2. Student completes an Individual Career and Academic Plan, or ICAP
3. Student demonstrates 21st century skills
4. Student demonstrates mastery of academic content in three content areas



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EXAMPLES: EARNING THE PWR ENDORSED HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Example 1 *(Students must meet all four indicators, this is an example of one indicator)*

Readiness Indicator 1 - Student is college ready in math and English language arts

To fulfill this requirement, a student must achieve two steps:

1. Satisfy the state's current Higher Education Admissions Requirements, also known as HEAR, or their proxies, by receiving a passing grade in 17 academic units/credits of coursework in English, math, natural science, social science and foreign language, and,
2. Demonstrate college remediation is not necessary in math or literacy by meeting any of the following benchmarks:
 - a. ACT cut scores of 18 in writing, 17 in reading and 19 in math
 - b. SAT cut scores of 440 in writing, 430 in reading and 470 in math
 - c. Test out of remediation on placement tests such as the Accuplacer
 - d. Successfully complete college-level courses via concurrent enrollment
 - e. Complete any necessary remedial courses in high school
 - f. Achieve specific cut scores on other exams as determined by the CCHE

Example 2 *(Students must meet all four indicators, this is an example of one indicator)*

Readiness Indicator 3 – Student demonstrates mastery of academic content in three areas

To fulfill this requirement, a student must show proficiency in three of these seven subjects:

- Reading, writing and communicating
- Math
- Social and behavioral sciences
- Natural and physical sciences
- Arts and humanities
- World languages
- Career and technical education

To demonstrate proficiency in social and behavior sciences, for example, a student must achieve one of the following:

- Earn an overall 3.0 GPA or better in at least four courses, including U.S. and World history
- Achieve specific scores on state or national tests in social studies, or achieve certain scores on Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate social studies exams
- Complete a postsecondary, three-credit course in a social and behavioral sciences

To see the full criteria for the PWR endorsed diploma, please visit this Department of Education webpage - <http://www.cde.state.co.us/secondaryinitiatives/hsdiplomaendorsement>



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: EXAMPLE OF A STUDENT WORKING TOWARD COMPLETION OF THE FOUR READINESS INDICATORS

This example shows how one student might work through the four readiness indicators during high school as she pursues a Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) endorsed diploma.

Readiness Indicator 1 – Student is college ready in math and English language arts:

During her last semester, this student earned a 21 on the ACT writing section, which meets the current higher education requirement. But she struggled in Algebra 1 her freshman year. So she opted to enroll in two remedial math courses (060 and 090) as a sophomore and passed each course. Since then, her confidence has grown and she will enroll in a career and technical education (CTE) course, Geometry in Construction, to fulfill the math requirement.

Readiness Indicator 2 – Student completes Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP):

The student meets with her counselor in the fall to discuss her schedule and review the content of her ICAP. She spent her summer break building homes in Belize with her youth group and is now very interested in human rights issues. She updates her career goals and meets with a neighbor who was in the Peace Corps. The student's counselor enters this into the student's ICAP profile and the student has met the requirements for this indicator.

Readiness Indicator 3 – Student demonstrates 21st century skills:

The student then emails her youth group leader a one-page form to complete. He is happy to provide feedback on the dedication she showed everyone in Belize. Just 10 minutes later, he has submitted the online form and the student has received an automatic notification. Based on his superior rating of her excellent work ethic and independence, the student has met the requirements for all five skills but one, information literacy.

Readiness Indicator 4 – Student demonstrates mastery of three academic content areas:

The student earned a 21 ACT score so she easily meets the English requirement with continued enrollment in English courses. The student also has demonstrated her excellence in the World Language content area: as a native Spanish speaker, she was able to take an exam during a free period and quickly displayed her level of mastery. Finally, her last content area was met by earning a 3.0 grade point average in her science coursework. She had earned a D in her freshman biology class but worked hard in her other two sciences courses and was able to bring her average in science up to a B.